

March 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians/Caregivers and School Officials,

This letter is to update you on our community prevention and planning as the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to evolve. We understand there is concern and want to assure you that the Tompkins County Health Department (TCHD) continues to work closely with community partners, including our local school districts. TCHD continues to monitor and respond with guidance from NYS Department of Health (NYSDOH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

COVID-19 is spread person-to-person and causes a respiratory illness with fever, cough and difficulty breathing. We have been directed by NYSDOH to quarantine individuals for 14 days upon their return from an [affected country](#) (CDC travel alert 2 & 3 countries). Quarantine means staying at home away from others and not attending school. Health Department nurses daily contact quarantined individuals to check for symptoms of illness. To date, no locally quarantined persons have developed COVID-19 illness.

This is an important time to teach and remind all to practice these steps:

- Stay home when you are sick
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. Use your sleeve or elbow if a tissue is not available (your “germ catcher”)
- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (sing Happy Birthday twice)
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (60-95% alcohol)
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe
- Consider switching from handshakes to elbow bumps

Should you have additional questions, contact the NYS COVID-19 hotline: 1-888-364-3065. The Health Department [website](#), [CDC](#), and [NYSDOH](#) are sources for additional information. If you have specific questions about your health or your child’s health, reach out to your healthcare professional directly.

Sincerely,

Frank Kruppa  
Public Health Director